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THE LATER ACTIVITIES OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

BY ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

The 12th of May, 1920, is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

Her father was an English country gentleman, whose name originally was Shore, but who changed it on inheriting the property of an uncle, Peter Nightingale, of Lea, in the beautiful county of Derbyshire. He and his wife were traveling in Italy at the time of Florence's birth, and she was named after her native city. The Villa Colombia, near the Porta Romana in Florence, bears a tablet commemorating the fact that Florence Nightingale was born there.

Her biographer says of her, "The popular imagination pictures Florence Nightingale at Scutari and in the Crimea as the ministering angel. And such in very truth she was. But the deeper significance of her work in the Crimean War lies elsewhere. It was as Administrator and Reformer, more than as angel, that she showed her peculiar powers. Queen Victoria, with native shrewdness and a touch of humor, hit off the truth about Miss Nightingale's services in the Crimea in concise words: 'Such a clear head. I wish we had her at the War Office.' "

In a letter to me, written in May, 1897, she says, "And now, work increasing every month, and every year, I have not (and have not had) five minutes' leisure to myself to finish this note." What was the work that she found so engrossing and so imperative in its demands? She returned from the Crimea in 1856, when she was thirty-six years old, and she lived to be ninety, in 1910. What were the activities that filled these years? Her health was so impaired by her work during the war that she was for fifty-two years an invalid, and for many of the later years of her life, confined to bed. It was here that I saw her in each of the three never to be forgotten visits which I was permitted to pay her.

To quote again from her biographer: "From a sick room in the west end of London Miss Nightingale played a part—and a much larger part than could be known without access to her papers—in reforming the sanitary administration of the British army, in reconstructing hospitals throughout the world, in founding the modern art of nursing, in setting up a sanitary administration in India, and in promoting various other reforms in that country. * * * It would be a mistake to regard Miss Nightingale's mission in the Crimean War

either as the summit of her attainment, or the fulfillment of her life. Rather it was a starting point."

When she returned from the East she needed a long rest. Had she taken it then, she might have been spared the years of invalidism that followed. She was worn out with overwork and anxiety, but instead of taking up some comparatively easy nursing work she set herself to the difficult task of bringing about reforms that would improve the health conditions in the army.

In a letter to a friend, written in 1857, she says: "I have had to see my children (the soldiers) dressed in a dirty blanket and an old pair of regimental trousers, and to see them fed on raw salt meat, and nine thousand of my children are lying, from causes which might have been prevented, in their forgotten graves. But I can never forget. People must have seen that long, long dreadful winter to know what it was." During the first seven months of the Crimean campaign, the mortality among the troops was 60 per cent. per annum from disease alone. Contrast that with the records of the war just ended, and see the results of the work that Florence Nightingale began.

After incredible labor on her part, a Royal Commission was appointed to examine into the state of affairs. Netley Hospital, the first great military hospital, was built, an army sanitary committee appointed, and an army medical school established. A general military hospital was built at Woolich after Miss Nightingale's plan, and a Mrs. Shaw Stewart, one of her helpers in the Crimea, was appointed superintendent of army nurses.

What the standing of nurses was at this time is illustrated by answers to questions sent out and printed in 1855. A doctor in the north writes: "If I can but obtain a sober set, it is as much as I can hope for." Another doctor said: "I always engage them without character, as no respectable person would undertake so disagreeable an office. The duties they have to perform are most unpleasant, and it is little wonder that many of them drink, as they require something to keep up the stimulus."

Florence Nightingale "made public opinion perceive and act upon the perception, that nursing was an art and must be raised to the status of a trained profession."

When the Civil War began in the United States, she was consulted by the Secretary of War at Washington, and when the British Government decided to send reinforcements to Canada, her advice was asked as to sanitary arrangements generally. She grappled with the problems presented to her, and spent much time and thought and an enormous amount of effort on them.

It was she who obtained the appointment of a Royal Sanitary Commission to do for the armies in India what had been done for the army at home. The Indian mutiny had filled her mind with thoughts of pity and reform on behalf of the British soldiers in India. For years this was one of her chief occupations, and she accomplished much.

In the European war of 1866, her expert advice was sought by both sides. The Crown Princess of Prussia, the mother of the Kaiser, once the Princess Royal of England, and Princess Alice of Hesse Darmstadt, both daughters of Queen Victoria, wrote to her for instructions about the work in war hospitals. They were on opposite sides, as Hesse Darmstadt had thrown in its lot with Austria, but they were one in their reliance on this chief authority in all nursing matters.

In 1861, it was desired to introduce a system of district nursing amongst the poor in Liverpool. There were no trained nurses to be had anywhere, so William Rathbone, a philanthropist who began the movement, consulted Miss Nightingale. At her suggestion he built a training school and home for nurses. Later trained nurses were introduced into the Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary. From this time on she was the prime mover in the remedial legislation which revolutionized the management of workhouse infirmaries. In 1897, the employment of pauper nurses in any workhouse was forbidden, and the training of the paid nurses continuously improved.

All of this involved an enormous correspondence and the writing of many documents, long consultations with her helpers and much cutting of red tape. She was the adviser-general on hospitals and nursing, and yet she was a confirmed invalid, unable at times to leave her bed.

She constantly supervised the Nightingale Training School for Nurses which she had founded in St. Thomas' Hospital, London; wrote addresses to the probationers and kept in close touch with the graduates. She was a friend and correspondent of many eminent men and women. Her interest in army affairs was unflagging; whether it was the barracks at Hong Kong or the cantonments in India, her advice was asked and valued.

She was unable to take any active part in sending out nurses to South Africa during the Boer War, 1899. The end of her activities was drawing near. A little later her eyesight failed. After 1902, she could only read or write with the greatest difficulty. She still liked, as she said, "to hear of good practical action by others." She was never tired of hearing some pages in Mr. Roosevelt's *Strenuous Life*, and would show her approval by rapping energetically on the table beside her.

She did not take kindly to the introduction of a nurse. Sometimes when she had been tucked up for the night, she would get out of bed and tuck the nurse up.

In 1907, King Edward conferred upon her the Order of Merit, and the next year she was presented with the Freedom of the City of London. These honors came too late to give her much pleasure; she only understood that some kindness had been shown her.

In May, 1910, at a large gathering in Carnegie Hall, New York, Mr. Choate testified to the admiration of the entire American people for Florence Nightingale's great record and noble life. Three months afterwards, on August 13th, she fell asleep at noon and did not wake again.

She might have been buried in Westminster Abbey, but in accordance with her own wish she was laid in the churchyard of her old home, East Wellow, in Hampshire.

On one side of the family monument is a small cross with the letters F. N., Born 1820. Died 1910. As she desired, she has not even a separate memorial there. "Her works do follow her."

One of her many memorials is a magnificent statue erected by the city of London, not to the Reformer and the Administrator, but to the Nurse and Woman.

SELF-GOVERNMENT BY THE PHILADELPHIA HOSPITAL TRAINING SCHOOL

On February 2, 1920, final steps were taken by the nurses of the Philadelphia General Hospital in adopting student government. Six months previous to this, the majority of the students had in the various class meetings signified their desire to live under the new system. Committees appointed for the purpose formulated the constitution and by-laws, nominated officers and arranged and held the election. At a mass meeting attended by all the residents of the nurses' home the constitution and by-laws were adopted, and the control of the residence life of the students was formally surrendered to them by the chief nurse of the hospital, S. Lillian Clayton. The new regulations vary in few particulars from the former provisions. Under the Proctor system, order and neatness are maintained in the home. Discipline is administered by a Student Council composed of the association officers: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, house president, and one representative chosen from each class.